

A Moment of Suspense.

A Board meets in this city to-day which will decide a matter more vital to Virginia than any public question which now concerns her—more important, perhaps, than any which is likely to concern her for a number of years to come: a question the decision of which involves alike the people of the Mississippi Valley, and on the determination of the prosperity of the population of a considerable number of the States of this Union essentially depends. If that decision shall be adverse, it would be like the extinguishing of a cherished hope, whose importance would have to be estimated by the enlightened minds of the whole country, and that its disappointment would affect the welfare of several millions of people. If it should be favorable, as we sincerely trust will be warranted by the facts, it will open to Virginia a solution of all her present industrial difficulties, will cheapen the food of the East and the fuel of the West, and give an impulse to the Mississippi Valley similar to that which led to the development of the Northwestern States by the completion of the Erie canal in the year 1825.

We refer to the Board of United States Engineers, convened by order of the Secretary of War at the instance of the Senate Special Committee on Transportation, which meets in this city to-day. The duty assigned to this Board is to examine into the cost and practicability of the Central Water-line through Virginia and West Virginia. This subject has already been laboriously investigated by a number of distinguished engineers—McNair, Wright, Gill, Elliott, Gwyn, Fox, Lorraine, Craighead, Hutton, Terpin, Harris—all of whom have reported unqualifiedly in favor of the practicability of the route. The last survey was conducted in 1870, under the superintendence of Major Craighead, of the United States Army. In forwarding the reports received by him to Brigadier-General Hutton, Chief Engineer of the United States Army, Major Craighead remarks: "The question of practicability is settled by the data furnished by the reports hereto attached."

There is a tunnel, however, on this route, 1,700 feet above tide, through the Allegheny mountains, which will be 7.8 miles in length—longer than the Mt. Cenis tunnel—nearly double the length of the Hoosac tunnel—while the estimated cost of the whole work to the Ohio river is some \$50,000,000. It is not strange, therefore, it was eminently proper—that out of abundant caution, in view of the heavy expenditure involved, the great elevation of the summit-level, the limited supply of water, and the length of the tunnel, the Senate Committee, who have been so faithfully investigating the question of Transportation to the Seaboard, should desire even further satisfaction on this point in connection with this central water-line through Virginia. Before such a work is undertaken by Congress all doubt of its feasibility ought to be removed; and if the Board which has been summoned shall ratify the judgment of the engineers who have preceded them, all misgivings on the subject must necessarily be at an end.

We are gratified, therefore, that these distinguished representatives of the scientific department of the United States Army (and that equally eminent civil engineer Benjamin H. Latrobe) have convened in Richmond on this mission. As gentlemen of the highest reputation in their profession we welcome them to the capital of Virginia; and we may interchange mutual congratulations that their errand is one which is calculated to bind together by a common interest the Ancient Dominion and that "Northwest Territory" which she surrendered nearly a hundred years ago as a free gift to the American Union, which, in accepting the princely donation, provided in the organic law "that the navigable waters leading into the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence, and the carrying places between the same, shall be common highways, and forever free"—such a common and free highway across this continent as Virginia seeks to-day to establish between the gates of the Atlantic and the waters of the Mississippi and the Missouri rivers. As a tributary to whom has been referred the final adjudication of the claims of the James River and Kanawha canal as a connecting link in the great water-line between the Mississippi and the James we welcome them—hopeful, almost assured as we are, of the result of their deliberations, and ready to bow, as we are, because we know that it will be just, to any adverse decision.

With deep suspense we shall await their action, feeling, as we do, that the weal or woe of Virginia is bound up in that result. Our industry is utterly demoralized and paralyzed; our people are poor beyond the power of exaggeration; our labor system is in a transitional state; our agriculture is unproductive; our minerals sleep in the bowels of the earth; our cities are practically cut off from active business communication with the West. We look to the construction of this canal and the improvement of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers as the means of accomplishing here what the Erie canal accomplished for the State and City of New York; while we should have, what New York did not have, coal and iron to load back to the West.

The beneficial effects upon Virginia would not be instantly realized; we should have to incur the inconveniences incident to a change of industrial pursuits. The cultivation of wheat, for example, we should have to abandon. It has already ceased to be profitable. We should get cheaper food from the West, and we should learn to diversify our rural industry as has been done in New York and New Jersey. Our people would seek new occupations. We should utilize our forests and work our mines; we should plant fruit-trees and turn our attention to the products of the dairy; the stimulus given to business of every sort would develop our cities and towns; we would create a demand for the products of the farm and garden.

Our canal would not terminate at Hampton Roads. Its cargoes would be landed at will at Baltimore at the head of the Chesapeake, at Philadelphia by the Chesapeake and Delaware canal, or at New York by the Delaware river and the Delaware and Hatteras canal. Or, turning southward, they might pass into the Albemarle and Chesapeake canal and follow the sounds of North Carolina. Or they might, if destined for New York or Philadelphia, or points south of Virginia, pass through the capes and make the voyage on the open sea.

We have said nothing about the transportation of the grain of the Northwest to the European grain markets, our space being already occupied.

County Courts.
We cannot over-estimate the importance of the county courts to the people. They stand in the same relation to higher courts than common schools do to the higher institutions of learning. Ninety out of a hundred people must get all they will ever learn in the schools out of the common schools, and it would be better for society that all the higher schools should be abolished than that the common schools should be discontinued. So society could better stand the abolition of the circuit courts than the county courts. Those courts are positively indispensable to society—to its peace, order, and security.

Then, why should this great necessity not be made as efficacious and useful as possible? This wise statesman would make all needful public institutions beneficial. He would have them respectable, energetic, intelligent, systematized, honest, and reliable. But to impair their usefulness by weakening their energies and diminishing their dignity would be treachery to the State, and would be inflicting serious injury upon the people. Show us a county court that is wise, energetic, and honest, and we will show you a community that enjoys order and security, and lives contented. Show us one, however, that is inefficient, unintelligent, unreliable, and injudicious, and we will show you an unhappy, discontented, and complaining people.

Western Mining.
The ensuing year promises considerably increased activity in the mining operations of the Kanawha Valley. There has been quite an addition within three months to the population of the mineral region. The English company that has lately invested largely in the Gauley mines has begun preparations for active operations as soon as these preparations can be accomplished.

The movements of the English company are quite interesting. Yet other parties are looking towards active developments of mines that are rich in mineral wealth. The English company appears to have taken hold of their enterprise with decided zeal and confidence. Their agent, Professor Axsted, returned last summer with most elaborate and satisfactory reports, and the company voted him a large sum in recognition of his valuable services. And what was better still, the whole capital stock of the company for the Virginia enterprise was at once paid up and orders given for immediate movement.

These facts must have a good effect upon the interests of the Kanawha Valley. Property in that valley, richly stored with coal and iron, is offered for sale, and open to prompt operations, lying as it does immediately upon the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad. Some of it constitutes the very richest part of the Kanawha coal-fields. Such property so disposed cannot remain idle. It is impossible that it can continue unproductive while mines on the Ohio and Monongahela, less rich, less convenient for working, are busily mined, and the lands where they lie sell for \$500 to \$1,000 per acre.

Things will necessarily accommodate themselves to circumstances, and these Kanawha mines will soon show scenes of business activity that will exceed all the prophecies of the prophets. The railroad must lower its rates to the lowest paying point, and count upon the increase of transportation for its reward. Its coal business ought soon to be equal to that of any coal-railroad in the Union.

Judge Hoopes is making headway in the good opinions of judicious and conservative people. The Alexandria Sentinel speaks very favorably of his department on the occasion of his opening court for the first time in this city. It says: "It is the concurrent testimony of all who appeared before him (Judge Hoopes) as attorneys to-day (his first day of business in the court) that he evinces on the bench a quickness of comprehension of the legal points of a case, and that method, dispatch, and good judgment which are among the most desirable attributes of a justice."

But the Judge, it is reported, has taken some positive measures which very clearly show a purpose that will be gratifying to the public. It is stated in the Engineer that he doctored the fees of H. H. Wells, late district attorney, in certain cases from \$1,650 to \$500, and, furthermore, that he refuses to sign any more orders for the sale of property in front of the custom-house in this city; and will require that sales shall take place where the property is located.

This is very gratifying. Such a thing as lifting up the paw that had been laid upon the litigant in the United States Court was regarded impossible. It was thought that reduction and refunding in that court were as impossible as it was for cattle to pass out of the lion's den. Then, the selling of property in front of the custom-house was a way to throw to the winds the remains of the bankrupt, leaving nothing to anybody who had real claims upon it. The sales where the property is located will be a great advantage to all concerned in that property.

Mrs. MYRA CLARK GAINES, the telegraph announcer, has brought suit against CALK CUSHING. He was, we suppose, the only public man in the country old enough for the great female litigant to sue.

Miss CUSHMAN, the eminent tragic player, will appear on the Richmond stage next week. She is the greatest tragic actress ever produced by this country, and in some peculiarities has no equal. Her "Meg Merrilies" is superior to that of any contemporary actress.

New Books.
The Parisians. By Lord LYTON. With illustrations by SYDNEY HALL. New York: HARRIS & BROTHERS.
This is the late Lord LYTON's last novel. An introductory note from the young Lord LYTON styles "The Parisians" a work of "dramatized observation, designed to illustrate the effect of 'modern ideas' upon a 'whole community.'" In some respects Belver was the master-novelist of his age. His last production well maintains his great powers as an author.
For sale by J. T. ELLYSON.
Belver, or, Two Little Wooden Shoes. A Story. By "CUTIE," author of "Strathmore," "Under Two Flags," &c. Philadelphia: LIPPINCOTT & CO.
A well-known author, some of whose works, at times, border upon doubtful proprieties.
For sale by J. T. ELLYSON.
THE ORIGINATOR AND ENGINEER ALSO.—[From the Norfolk Day-Book, 8.1.]—Having worked for nothing long enough, we don't propose to go into court and prove our claim for the mere vanity of the thing. We stood here in this section of Virginia with a paper twice as large as our present sheet, having more influence than any other paper in this section, and "in the face of a perfect storm of opposition and bitter attack," and planned and carried that measure to its successful termination.
[That is, the new movement.]

General Assembly of Virginia.

WEDNESDAY, February 4, 1874.
SENATE.

Lieutenant-Governor WITHERS presiding. Prayer by the Rev. Charles H. Read, D.D., of the Grace-Street Presbyterian church.

COMMITTEE REPORTS.

Mr. KIRKPATRICK, from the Committee on Public Institutions, reported bills to amend section 19 of chapter 77 of the Code of 1873, concerning the Board of Visitors of the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College, and the Board of Curators of the Hampton Normal Academy; to amend and reenact section 12 of chapter 78 of the Code, in relation to superintendents of schools, &c.

An act to extend the time within which the Farmville, Charlottesville and Staunardsville Narrow-gauge railroad may be commenced and completed. Approved February 2, 1874.

An act to incorporate a section of a portion of Smith's Creek and Chatham's creek a lawful fence, approved the 8th of March, 1873. Approved February 2, 1874.

An act to incorporate the Virginia Club, of the city of Norfolk. Approved February 2, 1874.

An Appeal to the Legislature.
We commend the following appeal to the attention of the General Assembly:

James V., February 3, 1874.
Great injustice will be done our people and much suffering will follow the refusal of the Legislature to grant the relief asked for [that is, to be relieved from paying certain taxes called "delinquent"]

The bare idea of taxing a people, and then selling their farms, or lots in town, for delinquent taxes, is known that said lands were held by the bayonet—a power which Virginia could not resist—is monstrous. Moreover, a very large proportion of this delinquent tax accumulated by the Freedmen's Bureau held in possession of the negroes who were placed in possession of the land, and the courts, since the "possession" all were powerless, sheltered and "possession" the State, none whatever. Then, upon what principle of right or justice can the State claim taxes of a poor, ill-used, down-trodden people?

There is another fact, and a very significant one. Our remembrance this town, and another year, the tax bill up to 1870, I think, were made out from the assessment of 1860, at which time the town was in its greatest degree of prosperity, and the buildings, many of them valuable, were all standing. These delinquent taxes are assessed at the valuation of 1860.

For example: I owned a lot worth \$9,000, and another worth \$7,000—both highly improved. The improvements were all destroyed, and the lots held—some of them—until 1871—and a part of one to this day—by negroes. Here comes a delinquent tax bill for taxes from 1865 to 1870 upon a part of this property at the valuation of 1860, when all the improvements were standing.

The above statement of the case is stronger than any other sort of argument.

The House Committee on the Judiciary has a special meeting this morning for the consideration of the county-court system. Nearly all the members were in favor of giving the present plan a full and fair trial, and to effect that end they proceeded to amend the Code in numerous respects. The whole tendency is to further dwarf the importance of county courts and to give the circuit and district courts the jurisdiction of the county courts may be enlarged. It is believed to be the purpose of some members to crowd the circuit courts with business, and then raise a demand for five or six more circuit judges—Chester, in Petersburg News.

[Let the people remember. There will be no Governor to elect in 1875.]

MARRIAGES.
Married, on Wednesday the 4th inst., at the Second Baptist church, by Rev. C. C. Hilling, D.D., Mr. CHARLES S. MORRIS and Miss KATE S. PHILLIPS: all of this city.

DEATHS.
Died, at his residence, in Manchester, Va., February 4th, of consumption, GEORGE W. SHORT, in the forty-seventh year of his age.

One Churchy died, beneath, Though divided by the stream— In the narrow stream of death.

One arm of the living God, To His command we bow; Part of His host has crossed the flood, And part are crossing now.

Our spirits, too, shall quickly join, Like theirs, in glory's glow; And shout to see our Captain sign, To hear his trumpet blow.

O, that we now might grasp, O, that we now might grasp, The hand of him who lives and reigns, Lord of the world, the waves divide, And lead us to the promised land.

His funeral will be preached TO-DAY, at the Baptist church in Manchester, at 2 o'clock P. M. Friends and acquaintances of the family are respectfully invited to attend.

Died, at his father's residence, Sunday morning, February 1st, at 5 o'clock, of group, ROBERT C. YOUNG, aged 18 years, 11 months, and 10 days, after a long and painful illness.

Died, on the 31st of January, 1874, at Manassas, New Kent county, in his sixty-third year, SAMUEL P. NORTON, leaving wife and five children, and devoted children to mourn his death.

May the Great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls watch over and bless the souls of the departed, and grant them to enter into life. Dear ones, you do not mourn as those who have no hope.

Died, on the 4th of February, of whooping-cough, at his residence, in the city of Richmond, Virginia, aged 40 years and five days, JAMES HOLLOMAN, youngest child of John and Margaret J. Fry, aged one year, four months and seven days.

When bloomed and cheered my heart; Fair, fervent comfort of an hour, Specious with bright and false forms, Sweet to deceive and false to me.

From adverse blasts and lowering storms, Her favored soul here, With wings of truth and love, I loved to see no more.

Why should I weep my heart or fast? My soul will mount to meet her, And there my child I'll see.

Her funeral will take place at her parents' residence, on Monday, the 11th inst., at 11 o'clock, A. M. Friends and acquaintances are invited to attend without further notice.

BOARDING.
Private boarding—Nice rooms, and the best of the table, and served to a few more single gentlemen, at reasonable prices, by Mrs. ALLAN, at the corner of the city, near the city hall.

MISSES C. TEMPLE, No. 219 Governor street, has one VACANT ROOM on first floor, and would be glad to have eight or ten more. FASHIONABLE BOARDERS.

MULES, HORSES, &c.
Just arrived at TURNER'S STABLE, on Franklin street, SIXTY HORSES, and MULES, for sale.

HORSES—FORTY HEAD JUST ARRIVED—on sale at Mr. CLARK'S STABLE, on Franklin street, near the city hall. These animals are good workers, and will be sold at prices adapted to the times.

DENTISTRY.
JOHN MAHONY, DENTIST (formerly of West & Mahony). Office, 625 Main street, between Sixth and Seventh streets.

WAYT & SON, DENTISTS.
No. 104 NINTH STREET, RICHMOND, VA.

LIME AND CEMENT.
CASH ADVANCES MADE ON PROVISIONS, BLUE LUMP PLASTER, RICHMOND-GROUND PLASTER, in barrels or Manufacturers' agents for LIME and CEMENT. STAPLES & BLAIR, No. 1107 Basin Bank.

LIME! LIME! LIME!
900 barrels "INDIAN ROCK" LIME received this day. Constant receipts FRESH from kilns. For sale low. DILLON, ELLIOTT & CO., 55 S. Main street, 1603 Dock street.

presented for payment within two years.

Approved February 2, 1874.

An act to transfer the interest of the State in the Jacksonville and Christiansburg Turnpike Company to the counties through which it passes. Approved February 2, 1874.

An act incorporating the Rich Valley Tanning and Leather-Manufacturing Company in the county of Washington. Approved February 2, 1874.

An act to amend and reenact sections 1 and 6 of an act entitled "An act to incorporate the Norfolk and Princess Anne Turnpike Company, approved March 28, 1872." Approved February 2, 1874.

An act to incorporate the town of Banister, in the county of Halifax. Approved February 2, 1874.

An act to extend the time within which the Farmville, Charlottesville and Staunardsville Narrow-gauge railroad may be commenced and completed. Approved February 2, 1874.

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MEETINGS.

KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS.—The members of the RICHMOND LODGE, No. 14, KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS, are hereby notified to attend a stated meeting of their lodge, on Thursday, the 7th inst., at 8 o'clock. Members of sister lodges are particularly invited to attend. By order of the Chancellor, C. W. WOODRIDGE, Secretary.

ALL ROYAL ARCH MASONS.—Are cordially invited to attend a stated convocation of RICHMOND ROYAL ARCH CHAPTER, No. 2, at the Masonic Hall, on Franklin street, this (Thursday) EVENING, February 5, 1874, at 8 o'clock. A. G. B. 1874. A. N. 5874. A. N. 2404. at 6 o'clock. By order of the M. E. F. H. P. G. R. K. E. S. E. Secretary.

NOTICE.—A general meeting of the stockholders of the CLARK HILL RAILROAD COMPANY, will be held at the office of Messrs. Lancaster & Co., in the city of Richmond, on TUESDAY the 12th inst., at 10 o'clock, A. M. By order of the Board of Directors, D. S. WOODRIDGE, Secretary.

OFFICE RICHMOND RAILWAY COMPANY.—The RICHMOND RAILWAY COMPANY, will hold a meeting of the Board of Directors, on Thursday, the 14th inst., at 10 o'clock, A. M. By order of the President, J. H. SMITH, Secretary.

THE ANNUAL MEETING.—The stockholders of the RICHMOND RAILWAY COMPANY, will hold a meeting of the Board of Directors, on Thursday, the 14th inst., at 10 o'clock, A. M. By order of the President, J. H. SMITH, Secretary.

MILITARY NOTICES.
GRAYS, ATTENTION.—Assemble at the regimental armory on FRIDAY, the 8th inst., at 8 o'clock, for drill. By order of Captain L. J. BOSKIRK, Jr., 2nd Regt. N. Y. Artillery, 6th Dist.

AMUSEMENTS.
RICHMOND THEATRE.
Last nights of the celebrated COLEMAN CHILDREN.
THIS (THURSDAY) EVENING, DRIVEN FROM HOME.
SILVER STAR MATINEE, SATURDAY AT 2 O'CLOCK.
TWENTY-FIVE CENTS for all parts of the house. (To 5-11-1)

ASSEMBLY HALL.—For one week, commencing MONDAY, February 9th. First appearance in Richmond, M. HARTZ, the great lion of the circus, with his entire troupe, consisting of 800 Broadway, New York, will give a series of his most wonderful and extraordinary feats, as given by him for 24 consecutive months in New York. He will also exhibit his "HUMAN BASKET" (copyright), which has started the "HUMAN BASKET" in New York, and is now being exhibited in this city. He will also exhibit his "HUMAN BASKET" (copyright), which has started the "HUMAN BASKET" in New York, and is now being exhibited in this city. He will also exhibit his "HUMAN BASKET" (copyright), which has started the "HUMAN BASKET" in New York, and is now being exhibited in this city.

READINGS BY PROFESSOR VALENTINE.—Professor VALENTINE, of Richmond, will give a series of SELECT READINGS at 2nd Street Methodist Episcopal church, on THURSDAY, February 5th, commencing at 8 o'clock P. M. Admission, twenty-five cents. Tickets may be had at the bookstores of the city.

VIRGINIA OPERA-HOUSE.
Engagement for three nights and matinee SATURDAY, COMMENCING THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5th, of the world-renowned and original DAVENPORT EXHIBITIONS.
STARTLING EXHIBITIONS.
Will nightly occur the most unaccountable results, which have astonished the whole world, and pronounced to be the WONDER OF THE AGE. Admission, 50 cents. Reserved seats, 75 cents. For sale at R. Campbell & Co's art gallery, Matinee, 25 cents. (To 1-16-1)

MARDIGAS EXCURSION TO NEW ORLEANS AND RETURN.—Parties wishing to take place February 17th, can purchase round-trip tickets from the 15th of February to the 15th of March, at the rate of \$1.00 per person, and a return ticket at the rate of \$1.00 per person, good until 1st March. Pullman's palace cars, and other accommodations, for which he is celebrated.

MARDIGAS EXCURSION TICKETS.
Persons wishing to witness this great carnival, can purchase ROUND-TRIP TICKETS at the Richmond and Danville Railroad depot, from the 15th of February to the 15th of March, at the rate of \$1.00 per person, and a return ticket at the rate of \$1.00 per person, good until 1st March. Pullman's palace cars, and other accommodations, for which he is celebrated.

FOR SALE, 5,000 CORDS PINE WOOD.
On the stump, distant about seven miles from Richmond and about one and a half miles from the city, there is a large tract of pine wood, about 5,000 cords, and of the best quality. It is offered for sale at a low price, and on liberal terms—say one-fourth cash; balance on 12 and 18 months for approved, or on reasonable notes. For particulars apply to W. J. GUSSEN, Real Estate Agent and Auctioneer, 304 Williams street. (To 3-31-1)

TO TOBACCO-PLANTERS.
No fertilizer ever introduced has undergone severer tests or come out of them with a better record than

SOLUBLE PLANT GUANO.
It has been used in Virginia since 1865, and during that time has been applied to all kinds of soil under every variety of season. Evidence that it has given since great satisfaction is found in the fact that since its introduction over

15,000 TONS
have been sold in this market alone, and to letter and countries from all parts of the world.

5,000 FARMERS AND PLANTERS
of Virginia and North Carolina, who have used it from one to eight years, all going to establish it as a fact that, all things considered, it is

EQUAL TO ANY AND SURPASSED BY NONE.
We offer it with great confidence for use on the tobacco, cotton, and corn crops to be planted in 1874, with the assurance that it is in all respects fully equal to what has been in the past. Know the materials which enter into its composition and the men who manufacture it.

GUARANTEE THE STANDARD.
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